

***APPENDIX A***  
***PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT***

1. January 28, 2004 scoping letter
2. Mailing List
3. February 3, 2004 News Release
4. Four comments received
5. Mail Tribune article



IN REPLY  
REFER TO:

LCA-6502  
ENV-4.10

## United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
Pacific Northwest Region  
Lower Columbia Area Office  
825 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 1110  
Portland, Oregon 97232-2135

JAN 28 2004

SUBJECT: Comments Requested on the Proposed Larson Creek Fish Passage Project

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Bureau of Reclamation is proposing to contribute funding to the Larson Creek Fish Passage Project in Medford, Oregon. The Larson Creek drainage is a tributary to Bear Creek in the Rogue River Basin. The project will replace two sections of open canal with approximately 10,200 feet of buried pipeline, restore a section of the creek bed that is currently being used as a canal, and eliminate three fish passage barriers.

A new residential development currently underway prompted the proposal of this fish passage project. The development is located southeast of the intersection of Barnett Road and North Phoenix Road on the east side of the city of Medford. Reclamation funds would be used to replace portions of the open canals operated by Medford Irrigation District and Talent Irrigation District with a buried pipeline along Barnett Road (about 8000 feet) and along North Phoenix Road (about 2,200 feet). As a result of this action three fish passage barriers in Larson Creek currently used to channel irrigation water will be eliminated and 3 miles of stream channel upstream of the diversions will become accessible to fish. The lower reaches of Larson Creek are currently used by Coho salmon and the project area historically supported Steelhead runs.

Reclamation cannot provide funding for the proposed project until a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review of the proposed federal action is evaluated. In accordance with NEPA, Reclamation is required to identify environmental and social issues that may be of concern or potentially significant in the area within which a Federal action may be undertaken. We are seeking your assistance to identify any possible social and environmental impacts or concerns that may result if the proposed project is funded.

Your written comments should be submitted by February 27, 2004 to the above address. If you have questions, please contact me at 503-872-2846 or at [tsummer@pn.usbr.gov](mailto:tsummer@pn.usbr.gov).

Sincerely,

Tanya Sommer  
Natural Resource Specialist

BEAR CREEK WATERSHED  
COUNCIL  
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MEDFORD, OR 97501

ASSOCIATION OF NORTHWEST  
STEELHEADERS  
PO BOX 22065  
MILWAUKEE, OR 97222

MEDFORD BRANCH LIBRARY  
413 WEST MAIN STREET  
MEDFORD OR 97501

MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE  
111 NORTH FIR  
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NATURAL RESOURCE  
CONSERVATION SERVICE  
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MEDFORD OR 97501

MIKE EVENSON  
OREGON DEPT. OF FISH AND  
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1495 EAST GREGORY ROAD  
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AL COOK, REGIONAL MANAGER  
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CRAIG HARPER  
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PORTLAND OR 97204

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US FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE  
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FRANK BIRD  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES  
SERVICE  
2900 NW STEWART PARKWAY  
ROSEBURG OR 97470

**NEWS RELEASE****A Century of  
Water for the West  
1902-2002**

Pacific Northwest Region  
Boise, Idaho  
Feb. 3, 2004

Contact: Contact: Ron Eggers (503) 872-2795  
Tanya Sommer 503-872-2846  
TDD: 711

**Reclamation Seeking Issues to be Identified for Larson Creek Fish Passage Analysis**

The Bureau of Reclamation is seeking identification of issues, impacts, or concerns that may result from a fish passage project in Medford, Oregon. Written comments are requested by February 27.

Reclamation's Water Conservation Field Services Program is proposing to contribute half of the funding to the Larson Creek Fish Passage Project in Medford, Oregon. The Larson Creek drainage is a tributary of Bear Creek in the Rogue River Basin. The project would replace 2 sections of open canal with approximately 10,200 feet of buried pipeline, restore a section of the creek bed that is currently being used as a canal, and eliminate 3 fish passage barriers.

Reclamation funds would be used to replace portions of open canals operated by Medford and Talent Irrigation Districts with a buried pipeline. These irrigation districts are contributing fifty percent to the project. As a result, three fish passage barriers in Larson Creek currently used to channel irrigation water would be eliminated and three miles of stream channel upstream of the diversions would become accessible to fish. The lower reaches of Larson Creek are currently used by coho salmon and the project area historically supported steelhead runs.

A new residential development currently underway prompted the proposal of this fish passage project. The development is located southeast of the intersection of Barnett Road and North Phoenix Road on the east side of the city of Medford.

Reclamation will complete the environmental assessment required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The first step in this process is identifying issues and concerns. An environmental assessment is expected to be completed during the summer of 2004 and construction could begin in the fall.

To be placed on a mailing list or to identify possible social and environmental impacts or concerns if the proposed project is funded, please write to Tanya Sommer, Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Columbia Area Office, 825 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 1110, Portland OR 97232, or call (503) 872-2846. Comments are requested by February 27.

Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the United States, with operations and facilities in the 17 Western States. Its facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits.

- # -



## Memorandum

Date: March 24, 2004

To: Tanya Sommer, Bureau of Reclamation

cc: Greg Summers, Portland

From: Alan Solbert, Sacramento *AS*

Subject: Larson Creek Fish Passage Analysis

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TO	INIT	DATE	
0502	<i>BS</i>	3/29	
FILE			

Please add the following to your mailing list for the subject project:

Alan Solbert	Greg Summers
Jones & Stokes	Jones & Stokes
2600 V Street	317 S.W. Alder Street
Sacramento, CA 95818	Portland, OR 97204

We are particularly interested in any comments you receive on the proposed project as we are working on the Feasibility Study/EIS for the WISE Project. Thank you for your assistance.



OFFICE OF  
THE CITY COUNCIL  
E-mail: [cnclmed@ci.medford.or.us](mailto:cnclmed@ci.medford.or.us)

CITY OF MEDFORD  
411 WEST 8TH STREET  
MEDFORD, OREGON 97501

TELEPHONE (541) 774-2000  
FAX: (541) 774-2522  
[www.ci.medford.or.us](http://www.ci.medford.or.us)

February 24, 2004

Ms. Tanya Sommer  
Natural Resource Specialist  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation  
825 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 1110  
Portland, OR 97232-2135

Re: Proposed Larson Creek Fish Passage Project

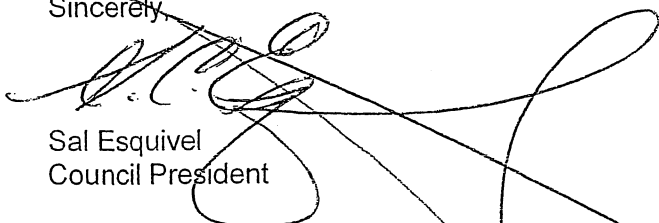
Dear Ms. Sommer:

The City of Medford believes that the potential environmental and social impacts of Bureau of Reclamation funding for the Larson Creek Fish Passage Project are significant and positive. The city fully supports the Larson Creek Fish Passage Project, which is located in our newly developing Southeast Area, a specifically planned area that may ultimately house up to 10,000 residents.

The proposed project is an essential component in assuring that the streams in this urbanizing area are restored to fully functioning ecosystems. The City has supported this goal by requiring "Greenways" along the streams in the area (various forks of Larson Creek) of 50 feet in width along each side, and by providing citywide regulations for "Riparian Corridors" (100 foot wide corridors centered on streams providing salmonid habitat). The Greenway and Riparian Corridor designations also apply to the section of creekbed to be restored by this project. The Greenways will ultimately be open to public access and contain shared-use paths and other public amenities.


In addition to the removal of fish passage barriers, the project will result in the more appropriate conveyance of irrigation and storm water flows, and reduces their negative impacts on the natural streams. Please feel free to contact Suzanne Myers, Associate Planner, in the Medford Planning Department if you should need additional information from the City. We seriously hope that the BOR is able to contribute to this worthwhile expenditure of various public and private funding.

Sincerely,



Sal Esquivel  
Council President

cc: Steve Mason, Project Coordinator  
Larry Beskow, Medford City Engineer  
Scott Archer, Medford Parks & Rec. Director  
Robert Scott, Medford Planning Director  
Lou Mahar, Property Owner

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TO	INIT	DATE	
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FILE			



**From:** "john and lynne forsyth" <jlforsyth@charter.net>  
**To:** <tsommer@pn.usbr.gov>  
**Date:** Mon, Feb 16, 2004 4:49 PM  
**Subject:** Larson Creek Fish Passage Project

To: Tanya Sommer  
Natural Resource Specialist  
Bureau of Reclamation  
U.S. Dept. of Interior  
825 NE Multnomah St., Suite 1110  
Portland, Oregon 97232-2135

From: John W. Forsyth  
4611 Cloudcrest Dr.  
Medford, Oregon 97504

Re: Larson Creek Fish Passage Project

Dear Ms. Sommer:

Our family lived adjacent to Larson Creek in Medford for over 25 years, so I am well acquainted with the creek, the surrounding riparian habitat, the past development and some idea of the proposed new development. I recall very clearly the presence of "trout" (which I assume were small steelhead) in Larson Creek in the early 1970's. I strongly support the removal of fish passage barriers which might allow steelhead to again use this area for spawning. However, putting two miles of Larson Creek underground in a pipe certainly does NOT make any sense to me or (I suspect) to the fish (although, since there are now NO fish in Larson Creek, thanks to the manner in which the riparian habitat was previously "developed," I have not been able to ask any of them how they might feel about this!) So, I write to you on behalf of the steelhead who might have been, in hopes they might be encouraged to live there again.

In summary:

1. I strongly support the removal of fish barriers in Larson Creek and the return of the irrigation ditch to its previous state.
2. I strongly oppose putting any part of Larson Creek underground, other than where streets and roads pass over it.
3. I suspect the pipe business is the idea of greedy developers, who simply want to usurp the creek and its riparian habitat for building more houses.
4. I further suggest you ask the developers to go back to the drawing board and design a plan which preserves the remaining natural riparian area of Larson Creek and incorporates it into an overall plan to reintroduce steelhead into this area.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know what you decide.

Respectfully,

John W. Forsyth

cc: Doug and Linda Hildreth

CC: <firebird@mind.net>

**From:** "Linda Hildreth" <firebird@mind.net>  
**To:** <tsommer@pn.usbr.gov>  
**Date:** 2/2/04 4:21PM  
**Subject:** Larson Creek

Dear Tanya,

We are in receipt of your Jan 28 letter re Larson Creek Fish Project. We have lived on Santa Barbara, at the east end of Coal Mine Road for over 20 years. Larson Creek comes off Mt Baldy and runs west about 50 yards below our house.

As you may know, this spring fed creek flows all year, but is a trickle in the summer and can be a torrent in the early spring. Certainly no fish larger than a couple inches could reach this point in the summer. Any closed pipe should consider the spring floods.

Your note does not indicate exactly where the buried pipe will be located. Two miles of pipe does not sound to us like you are "reclaiming" the natural creek. It would seem that simply removing the three fish barriers would be a lot cheaper than two miles of pipe. It is also a bit hard for us to believe that fish will swim "upstream" and underground for two miles. And again, the creek east of North Phoenix is just too small in the summer for fish. There may well be three miles of creek east from North Phoenix, but fish would never go there.

We are well aware of the location of the new residential development which you state prompted the proposal. But it is also hard for us to conceive that the developers have the slightest concern for the welfare of a few fish. It would seem to us very logical that they would like the creek underground so that they could squeeze in more homes where the creek used to be. I would be very surprised if this was about anything but money.

The spring floods are real. About 12-15 years ago we installed larger culverts where Larson Creek goes under Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara is a public road, but privately maintained financially by the home owners). This was to try to prevent the annual flooding of the road during heavy spring rains. We installed two 4 foot diameter culverts and a 2 foot diameter culvert, and built up the roadbed considerably. Since then, on three or four occasions, there has been flooding over the road. This is in the face of low annual snow and rain levels the past several years.

My point is I would doubt that whoever is planning the 2 miles of underground pipe has planned to install one of sufficient size to handle the potential flood waters. Particularly if the Medford water district will be dumping water into the pipe too. Talent irrigation district dumps into Larson a few hundred yards downstream of Santa Barbara.

The current Larson Creek Bed is large enough to handle the vast majority of spring floods. This is of course a natural stream bed which supports a variety of wildlife and serves as an aesthetic attribute for residents. It is very difficult for us to picture an underground pipe

as "reclaiming" anything.

We have no problem removing existing fish barriers. That would be easy and cheap and accomplish the goal of allowing fish to get as far up Larson Creek as they could.

We do have a social problem with using our tax monies to aid and abet developers destroying Larson Creek.

Sincerely  
Doug and Linda Hildreth  
4870 Santa Barbara  
Medford, OR 97504  
firebird@mind.net

February 13, 2004

## Housing project gives nod to salmon habitat

### *Plans for a new subdivision include restoration of North, South forks of Larson Creek*

By MARK FREEMAN

Mail Tribune

Plans to resurrect two east Medford creeks inside a housing development could become a blueprint for how the Northwest can build subdivisions that not only are salmon-friendly, but salmon-enhancing.

A coalition of two irrigation districts, developer Lou Mahar, the Bear Creek Watershed Council, and several state and federal agencies hope to transform two Larson Creek tributaries into viable spawning and rearing habitat for wild steelhead and coho salmon.

The two streams — the North and South forks of Larson Creek — run through Stonegate Estates, a planned 203-home, 96-condominium subdivision off North Phoenix Road. They are about 2.5 miles east of Larson Creek's confluence with Bear Creek near Medford's Interstate 5 south interchange.

The North and South forks, which no longer meet naturally, are now blocked to fish passage by open-air irrigation canals, and one 500-foot stretch of the South Fork has been used as an irrigation ditch for decades.

But the groups plan to divert irrigation water through more than a mile of new, buried water lines, opening the way for re-uniting and enhancing the damaged creek areas within Medford's 1,000-acre Southeast Plan.

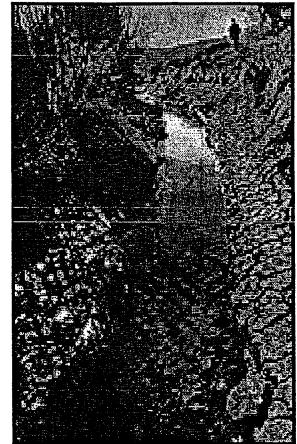
The work, state fish biologists say, will transform about three miles of heretofore unproductive waterways into new, viable steelhead habitat as houses spring up around it.

"We're looking at having a salmon stream right in the middle of town," says Steve Mason, a private fisheries biologist organizing the effort. "It shows how you can have a naturally functioning stream in a city."

New development around free-flowing streams is normally associated with bad news for salmon, which need cool, clean water to breed and feed. But experts say this project, estimated at about \$650,000, could provide a template for cohabitation of people and steelhead.

"If it all gets pulled off, this will be a real good example for how you really can have fish in an urban setting," says Jerry Vogt, an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist working on the project. "You're going to have new houses built in an area with a stream where, hopefully, fish will be spawning."

Mason says the construction and habitat work could begin as early as June and could be finished this fall, provided some public funding comes through.



□ Steve Mason, a private fisheries biologist, walk along a stretch of the south fork of Larson Creek, now used as an irrigation ditch.

Mail Tribune / Bob Pennell

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), which funds salmon-restoration efforts in the state, next month will announce whether it will grant a \$150,000 request for the in-stream improvements. The federal Bureau of Reclamation is now conducting a required environmental assessment before the agency can contribute about \$125,000 toward the pipeline portions of project.

The Talent Irrigation District and Medford Irrigation District together have already pledged about \$125,000, mostly in equipment and labor for the work, Mason says.

Mahar's Pacific Trend Building Co., which is developing the land immediately around the two creeks, has paid an undisclosed amount for the project's design and will do some of the construction, Mason says.

But the group remains about \$100,000-\$125,000 short of making the concept a reality, and Mason is seeking public or private funding to cover the gap.

Backers believe the benefits for steelhead — and possibly for threatened wild coho salmon, which are present in low numbers within the Bear Creek basin — make the project sellable to agencies like OWEB, which is charged with improving Oregon's ability to grow and sustain wild salmon runs.

"In today's world, we have to be environmentally friendly," TID Manager Jim Pendleton says. "Everybody feels good about these types of projects, and everybody benefits from this."

Mahar declined to comment on the project.

Historically, TID and MID have used the creeks and the mud-bottomed canal to deliver water to their irrigators as well as pass as much as 8 cubic feet per second of water from TID to MID. To operate the canals, the irrigation districts have rights to block most flows into Larson Creek.

But that canal system needs to be altered for Mahar to develop the Stonegate Estates area east of North Phoenix Road and north of Coal Mine Road.

Plans are to create two underground pipelines — one along the North Fork and a second paralleling North Phoenix Road — so the two districts can fulfill their water requirements to irrigators.

"That created a nice window of opportunity to do something," Mason says.

By removing the diversion points and allowing more water to flow in the streams, the area can be accessible to steelhead, Vogt says.

Wild steelhead occasionally stray into the South Fork, but any progeny from the spawning fish get trapped in fields because they are blocked from successfully migrating to Bear Creek, Vogt says.

If done, the project would remove three areas where upstream passage is blocked, plus remove the downstream impediments. Plans also are to restore a section of the South Fork so the two streams will again meet naturally to form Larson Creek.

Those steelhead that migrate into the area would then find rock weirs helping create gravelly pools. They allow steelhead to jump systematically up the now barren stretches.

The project also calls for creating riparian zones to protect the creek while adding a bike path and possibly even viewing areas with signs telling visitors of the wild steelhead's life cycle.

"Not only do we want steelhead migration, we want to make it possible for people to connect with that," Mason says.

Theoretically, the streams also will be open for use by wild coho if or when the threatened species increases its presence in the Bear Creek basin, Vogt says.

"If we get enough fish back to Bear Creek, they'll be able to take advantage of that habitat."

Reach reporter Mark Freeman at 776-4470, or e-mail [mfreeman@mailtribune.com](mailto:mfreeman@mailtribune.com)

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You can find this story online at:

<http://www.mailtribune.com/archive/2004/0213/local/stories/01local.htm>

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